Culture's Software

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Communication Styles

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-7717-4
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7717-6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part III: Media Discourse

Discourse markers in classroom communication*

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Abstract: In this article the functions of Hungarian discourse markers are discussed on the basis of an analysis of classroom discourse and transcripts from the Hungarian ASZ MODA corpus. The analysis demonstrates that discourse markers are dominant stylistic features of teacher explanations and of student answers as well. Discourse markers assist in introducing and continuing discourse in teachers' explanations and play a role in maintaining the teacher–student relationship. Additionally, they also signal, to the students, the teacher's relatedness to the discourse and to the communicative situation as well as have a discourse planning function. In student answers, due to the asymmetrical nature of speech situation, the interpersonal functions of discourse markers are played down, but the referential, structural and cognitive functions of the discourse markers are predominant, as the analysis of *hát* 'well' clearly demonstrates.

1. Introduction

Research into discourse markers is a popular and topical issue addressed in the international literature on pragmatics. Several studies have explored their use in professional communication (including classroom discourse). Some of these focus on translation and in foreign language teaching (e.g. Fung 2003, Lee and Hsieh 2004, Castro 2009), others on the classroom discourse in general (e.g. Archakis 2001, Christodoulidou 2011). Regardless of the findings of the linguistics literature, however, discourse markers – especially those used in spoken discourse, such as *hát* "well", *szóval* "that is", *ugye* "right?" and *persze* "of course" – are routinely stigmatized in Hungarian primary and secondary education, labeled as functionless, sloppy and superfluous filler elements. But however strongly discourse markers are opposed by some, they frequently occur in spoken and written discourse – so much so that the Hungarian linguist Tamás Péter Szabó found in his 2009 investigation using semi-structured interviews (published in 2010) that, as far as their frequency is concerned, discourse markers actually dominate in utterances produced both by teachers and students. This is not really surprising since far from being functionless elements they have a great variety of uses.

In the present chapter I analyze stylistic aspects of classroom discourse, specifically, teacher explanations and student answers, from the point of view of the discourse markers of textual and interpersonal functions occurring in them. I aim to see, first, how these discourse markers contribute to the creation of text coherence and to the formation of more understandable and teachable content, and, second, what speaker attitudes students are able to express with their help.

2. Characteristics of discourse markers

* This research was supported by the European Union and the State of Hungary, co-financed by the European Social Fund in the framework of TÁMOP 4.2.4. A/2-11-1-2012-0001 'National Excellence Program'.

Discourse markers are linguistic elements that defy easy definition. Even linguists working on them do not all agree on how to name this group of words and what characterizes them. There are more than 40 designations for discourse markers in the literature (cf. Fraser 1999), including *discourse connective* (Blakemore 2002), *discourse operator* (Redeker 2006), *discourse particle* (Fischer 2006), *pragmatic particle* (Foolen 1996), *discourse marker* (Fraser 1999), and *cue phrase* (Knott 1996). This variation in designations alone signals that discourse markers are complex and difficult to define. And it is not only the designations that vary but also the phenomena that linguists associate with discourse markers in the varying theoretical frameworks they work in. The term *discourse marker* does not specify part of speech, does not limit their role to being purely connecting elements, and characterizes the linguistic elements in question through their functional rather than formal characteristics.

Discourse markers form a functional class of words: they connect segments of discourse and mark pragmatic relations. Knowledge of the context is necessary for their interpretation in discourse, since they are able to connect any aspects of it: they can signal the relationship between parts of conversation, between speakers, between speaker and segment of speech, and can also make reference to the wider speech situation. Finally, they can also play a discourse organizing role, signaling turn taking and keeping (Schirm 2013a). A shared characteristic of all discourse markers is that they are both syntactically and in their part of speech affiliation variable and have a variable scope, usually occurring turn-initially. Fraser (1999, 938) considers them markers of two-place relations, citing attitude marking, multifunctionality, and context dependency as their pragmatic characteristics. Besides their attitude signaling function, however, discourse markers also have textual roles, since through marking relations between discourse segments, they contribute to creating text coherence. According to Jucker (1993), a semantic characteristic of discourse markers is that they have procedural meaning, usually do not affect the truth conditions of utterances or propositional content, but have an emotive and expressive function. Their meaning is procedural and not conceptual. Of the various definitions of discourse markers, I use Furkó's (2007, 80–81) in my analysis, which differentiates between the following 10 characteristics of these elements: (1) non-propositionality, (2) optionality, (3) context-dependence, (4) multifunctionality, (5) sequentiality, (6) weak clause association, (7) variable scope, (8) procedural meaning and non-compositionality, (9) high frequency of occurrence, and (10) orality.

Discourse markers are multifunctional, and this makes it more difficult to define the range of elements under this heading. Since many linguistic elements are able to function as discourse markers (Foolen 1996), it is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of these elements (Jucker 1993, 436). The most frequently discussed discourse markers in English are *after all, although, and, anyway, because, but, essentially, furthermore, however, indeed, in other words, I mean, nevertheless, now, of course, oh, or, so, then, therefore, you know,* and *well.* In Hungarian, the

following words function as discourse markers most frequently: *aha, akár* "even", *akkor* "then", *azért* "because", *aztán* "then", *bár* "although", *bizony* "[emphasizer]", *csak* "only", *csakhogy* "however", *-e* "[question particle]", *egyáltalán* "at all", *egyébiránt* "otherwise", *egyébként* "anyway", *elvégre* "after all", *éppenséggel* "actually", *és* "and", *ezzel szemben* "contrary to this", *de* "but", *hát* "well", *hiszen* "since", *hm* "hmm", *így* "this way", *illetve* "or rather", *ilyen* "such", *is* "also", *izé* "[hesitation marker]", *jaj* "oh", *lám* "behold", *látod* "you see", *legalább* "at least", *már* "already", *még* "still", *na* "then", *nemde* "[interrogative marker]", *nemhogy* "not even", *netalán* "perhaps", *nos* "well", *pedig* "even though", *persze* "of course", *pláne* "what's more", *sőt* "even more", *szóval* "so", *talán* "perhaps", *tehát* "all in all", *tényleg* "really", *tudniillik* "that is", *tudod* "you know", *tulajdonképpen* "in fact", *úgy* "that way", *ugyan* "oh well", *ugye* "right?", *ugyebár* "right?", *úgymond* "[quotation marker]", *vagyis* "that is", *vajon* "whether", *valóban* "really", *viszont* "although", and *voltaképpen* "actually".

These listings already show that the discourse marker is not a grammatical or part of speech category but a functional, pragmatic one, which includes discourse organizing elements. It includes primarily conjunctions (*és* "and", *de* "but", *sőt* "even more", *vagyis* "that is"), adverbs (*akkor* "then", *aztán* "then"), verbs (*tudod* "you know", *látod* "you see"), particles (*-e* "[question particle]", *csak* "only"), modifiers (*talán* "perhaps"), pronouns (*így* "this way", *ilyen* "such") and sentence level conjuncts (*nos* "well"), but, more widely, collocations (*ezzel szemben* "contrary to this") can also be analyzed as discourse markers. Non-verbal discourse markers – various hesitation markers like *hmm* and gestures – also exist.

The functions and usefulness of discourse markers are issues that divide language professionals. Linguists working in pragmatics and discourse analysis (Schiffrin 1987, Fraser 1999) consider them a natural phenomenon accompanying speech and regard them to be elements rich in functions due to their role in organizing discourse and conveying emotive and expressive content. Linguists working in spontaneous speech research (e.g. Fox Tree 2010) usually emphasize the discourse planning function of discourse markers. In contrast, Hungarian purist authors and a significant part of Hungarian primary and secondary school teachers regard discourse markers as unnecessary filler words with no function whatsoever. Such stigmatization is directed primarily at discourse markers of spoken language use and elements that are of conjunction origin: their use is labeled as impolite, marking bad style and manners. In my analysis I aim to demonstrate that discourse markers are stylistically integral parts of classroom discourse, which have a rich set of meanings and important functions – despite widespread beliefs to the contrary.

3. Data, method, and hypotheses

I have used two methods of data collection for the present study. On the one hand, I have used data from corpuses, one of them being on Ágnes Antalné Szabó's *Magyar nyelvű osztálytermi*

diskurzusok adatbázisa (ASZ MODA 2002–) [Database of Hungarian language classroom discourse]. In addition, I have also used my continually expanding corpus of classroom discourse. I selected a total of 10 lessons, which I then analyzed discourse analytically. Of the 10 lessons, 6 were primary school lessons and 4 secondary school lessons, ranging from 3rd to 11th grade. The range of lessons selected for analysis ensured that the discourse markers occurring in student responses would not reflect just one age group's usage but, instead, provide an overview of the usage of students between 9 and 17 years of age. I also strived to represent a range of teachers providing the teacher's data for my analysis by including lessons taught by both older and younger, both female and male teachers who teach in various types of schools. This way, despite its relatively small size, the sample represents the various types of teacher discourse and can be used to map up typical tendencies. The results should be tested against a larger sample in the future, however. The 10 selected classroom sessions were all Hungarian grammar lessons, thus, allowing to observe how teachers use discourse markers when teaching rules of grammar, and whether they refer to the use of such elements and/or explicitly instruct students not to use them.

In addition to the corpus data, I have used data collected by myself in 4 focus group interviews: two in Szeged, Hungary, and two in Nitra, Slovakia. I have decided to use a group of minority Hungarian participants from Nitra for focus group interviews too since I hypothesized that bilingual speakers like them have different opinions about the use of discourse markers and linguistic bias about them. Since I wanted to analyze discourse markers occurring in text types in classroom communication in primary, secondary and also tertiary education, I involved university faculty, staff and students in the focus group interviews. Most of the participants (7 faculty members, and 1 student) in one of the interviews was from the faculty of sciences, whereas those of the other three interviews were students of both humanities and sciences (19 of them in Nitra, and 8 in Szeged). The youngest participant was 18 years old, the oldest 68, whereas the ratio of women vs. men was 62.85% vs. 37.15%. Involving both faculty and students in the study was motivated by aiming to gain insight into the views, about discourse markers, of both types of participants in classroom discourse, namely, teachers and students. Classroom interaction is characteristically a context where teachers' views about language can strongly define what students are supposed to believe about it.

My initial hypothesis was that discourse markers would occur frequently in classroom communication due to their textual and attitude signaling functions. I also expected that, due to the characteristics of the speech situation, students and teachers use discourse markers in different proportions and different functions in their typical speech acts (teachers in explanations, while students in responses). I assumed that in the case of discourse markers used in students' responses the interpersonal function would become secondary, due to the asymmetrical nature of student–teacher communication, and, instead of it, the referential, structural and cognitive functions would

be predominant. In addition, I also expected that the Hungarian discourse marker most stigmatized by school educators, *hát* "well", would turn out to express not only the uncertainty of students (as is believed by teachers in general and formulated in the widely shared linguistic bias) but a much wider range of meanings.

4. Classroom interaction

As a point of departure, let me refer to characteristics of classroom interaction and discourse. Classroom discourse is interactive communication between teacher and students, serving educational aims, occurring in an institutional setting and within fixed time limits; it is formal in style, ritualized and asymmetrical. During classic, frontal teaching, the right to speak is dispensed by the teacher, who manages the discourse and has the right to change topics. Teacher discourse is characterized by extensive redundancy, and dominated by the speech acts of asking questions, giving instructions, giving commands, reprimanding, and giving information, while the most frequent speech act occurring in student discourse is giving answers (Antalné 2005). Classroom interaction is ordered sequentially, and the most frequent structure is the three-part classroom exchange of teacher question – students answer – teacher feedback (Griffin and Mehan 1981). Besides passing on information, teachers also communicate norms, control student behavior, and often spread language ideologies.

The best way to approach discourse markers occurring in classroom interaction is from the point of view of their functions. Regarding the issue of the language of education, following Loch (1973), Zrinszky (2002, 38–39) differentiates between four functions: the operative, the instructive, the communicative and the emancipative functions. In his view, the operative function plays a role in the reproduction of cultural objects, the instructive function "makes learning possible", the communicative function serves the teacher–student relationship, whereas the emancipative function contributes to developing and employing critical thinking. However, Zrinszky does not elaborate on any of the functions in detail or provide specific linguistic examples, but it is safe to assume that the author relates what he calls the instructive and communicative functions with the various roles that discourse markers fulfill, i.e. the textual, attitude marking, and interactional functions – the functions Schiffrin (1987) associates with discourse markers.

The textual function defines the relationship between units of text, that is, for instance, as connection, reformulation, summary, or quotation. It is through these functions that discourse markers participate in creating and maintaining text coherence. The interactional function refers to the relationship of speaker and listener: speech acts, responses, opinions, evaluations, and elements referring to shared knowledge belong here. Discourse markers with an interactional function serve to direct attention primarily. And lastly, the attitude marking function expresses the relationship between the speaker and what is being said, that is, they provide an evaluation.

The role of discourse markers in classroom interaction was analyzed by Kertes (2011) on the basis of argumentation in high school final exam papers in literature, however, discourse markers fulfill the same roles also in classroom teacher–student interactions, and teacher questions, instructions and explanations (cf. Schirm 2013b). The same functions are also present in classroom interactions of teachers vs. students as well as in teacher questions, instructions and explanations, since text coherence is also an important stylistic characteristic of classroom dialogue and other text types. This predicts the great number of discourse markers used in textual functions, whereas interactivity and the dominance of question–answer adjacency pairs brings with it the occurrence of interactional and attitude marking elements.

Analyzing English language classroom discourses, Fung and Carter (2007) differentiate between four basic functions of discourse markers: the interpersonal, the referential, the structural and cognitive functions. The interpersonal function serves to diminish the social distance between speakers with the help of sharing common knowledge and expressing agreement attitudes. Researchers see the role of the referential function in signaling logical relations as well as digression and comparison; that of the structural function in signaling topic shifting and turn taking; whereas that of the cognitive function in signaling cognitive operations, hesitation, and rephrasing (Yang 2011, 105).

It is clear, then, that different authors offer different typologies of functions associated with discourse markers in their works, which occasionally overlap. However, in whatever way the functions of discourse markers are categorized, they undoubtedly make the communication between teachers and students more effective.

5. Results

In the analyzed lessons both teachers and students used discourse markers actively. Linguistic bias were not voiced in any of them, and only in once case did a teacher correct a student because of his use of the discourse marker *na* “then”, cf. (1) below:

(1)

Student: Hát jól van, na.

Teacher: Tomika, ez nyelvtan óra. Ezt a „jól van na” típusú dolgot felejtsük el.

Student: “Well, fine, then.”

Teacher: “Tommy, this is a grammar class. Let’s forget about these “fine, then” kinds of things.”

However, this instance in itself clearly shows that elements with an interpersonal function, which

can be used by teachers, are not expected be used by the other type of participants of the asymmetrical classroom interaction, students. From the regulated and hierarchical nature of classroom interaction what follows is that the two types of participants, teachers and students, are expected to produce different kinds of utterances. While teachers can make evaluative and subjective statements about and express their attitudes towards students, students cannot make such utterances at all, or only to a very limited extent. Thus, the communicative situation largely defines that discourse markers will be used in the various functions in different proportions by the two types of participants. The analysis has proven my initial hypothesis that students 'use of discourse markers in class is more limited than that of the teachers'.

Discourse markers that occur frequently in the classroom (*aha, egyébként* "anyway"*, hát* "well"*, illetve* "or rather"*, na* "then"*, persze* "of course"*, szóval* "so"*, tényleg* "really"*, tulajdonképpen* "in fact", and *ugye* "right?") are listed in Figure 1 (The proportion of the various discourse markers in the classroom data) together with their frequency count. As can be seen, *hát* "well" occurred the most frequently (n=156) in the data, followed by *ugye* "right?" (n=124), and *na* "then" (n=121). *Illetve* "or rather" occurred 38 times, *aha* 29 times, *persze* "of course" 18 times, *egyébként* "anyway" 14 times, and *szóval* "so" 12 times. The discourse markers with the lowest number of occurrences were *tulajdonképpen* "in fact" (n=8), *tényleg* "really" (n=7) and *nyilván* "clearly" (n=6). What is more informative regarding the status of discourse markers than simple frequency counts is, however, their categorization which type of participant they were used by. Figure 2 (The distribution of the various discourse markers in the classroom data) shows their distribution by participant in classroom discourse in my data, clearly highlighting that there were only two discourse markers, *hát* "well" and *tulajdonképpen* "in fact", which were used more by students than by teachers – all the other discourse markers were more frequent in teachers' utterances and only marginally used by students (as in the cases of *ugye* "right?", *na* "then", *illetve* "or rather", *persze* "of course", *szóval* "so" and *tényleg* "really"), or not at all (*aha*, *egyébként* "anyway" and *nyilván* "clearly"). The speech situation of classroom discourse and the speech acts associated with the participant types can explain this distribution, since the participants' use of discourse markers is aligned along their roles in the school setting. Explanation, the most frequent type of speech act used by teachers, is aimed towards sharing knowledge and is inherently characterized by involving phatic utterances and utterances eliciting feedback about the understandability of the content, making discourse markers of the interpersonal function (such as *ugye* "right?" and *na* "then") the most dominant. In addition, discourse markers also play a role in enhancing the flow of information by structuring the content of utterances and by eliciting students' attention. In contrast, students' answers to teachers' questions are limited speech acts where discourse markers of referential, structural and cognitive functions predominate. (For a range of examples illustrating these points, see sections 6 and 7 below.)

The focus group discussions revealed an interesting duality (Schirm 2013a): on the one hand, both faculty and student participants condemned the stigmatization of discourse markers, but, on the other hand, they stigmatized them themselves. The investigation also revealed that the participants, similarly to most speakers probably, had the foundations of their attitudes towards discourse markers laid in school, under the guidance of teachers (rather than, for instance, based on any readings in language cultivation literature). It also became apparent that bilingual, minority Hungarian participants were much more accepting of the use of the most stigmatized discourse marker, *hát* "well", than were monolingual participants from Hungary.

6. Discourse markers in teacher explanations

Teacher explanations are monologic utterances initiated by teachers, occurring between the teacher and the entire class and aimed at assisting students in understanding notions, rules, and theories (Falus 2003, 261). Teacher explanations are shorter than lectures, but include, like lectures, continuous speech and argumentation on the part of teacher and usually only listening on the part of the students. It typically has an informing function and is characterized by redundancy. Effective explanations are, according to pedagogical textbooks, "logical, clear, interesting, concise, and simple", while "passionate and accompanied by emotions" (Falus 2003, 262). The effectiveness of explanations is greatly aided by a clear statement of goals, an assessment of students' prior knowledge, examples, use of audiovisual tools, clear phrasing, energetic presentation, and logically structured argumentation. The latter, logically structured argumentation, is further aided by the use of conjunctions of inference and explanation when describing cause and effect relations. Empirical research has demonstrated that there is positive correlation between a frequent occurrence of conjunctions of explanation in teacher utterances and effective learning by students (Falus 2003, 264), according to which the textual role of discourse markers predicts their obligatory and relatively frequent occurrence in teacher explanations. However, the interpersonal function of discourse markers is rarely examined in research into teacher explanations.

The corpus of data examined for the present study contains a great number of discourse markers used by teachers (Schirm 2013b), as is illustrated by the following (2, 3, 4, 5) examples from it:

(2)

Teacher: **Na**, most a kérdés, amivel most foglalkozunk, az az, hogy mi az összetett szó és mi nem az. **Ugye? Hát** ez az, amit olyan nagyon nehéz eldönteni.

Teacher: "**So**, the question that we want to deal with now is what is a compound and what is not. **Right? Well**, this is what is so difficult to decide."

(3)

Teacher: **Na**, **akkor** most nézzük meg, hogy ennek a sikeres beszédnek milyen részei vannak, **tehát** menjünk egy kicsit tovább!

Teacher: "**Well, then**, let's look at what kind of parts this successful speech has, **so**, let's go on a bit."

(4)

Teacher: **Na** most itt nem azt írom, ha milliót lenne, **ugye akkor** 1 000 000-t, milliókat, **bizony ám**, **de** a -k is ott van, 1000000-kat.

Teacher: "**So**, now, here that's not what I'm writing. If it was *milliót* 'million [accusative]', right?, **then** *1 000 000-t*, *milliókat* 'millions [accusative]', **exactly**, **but** the *–k* is there, too, 1000000-kat 'millions [accusative]'."

(5)

Teacher: **Na de**, **ugye**, **tudjuk azt**, hogy van olyan, hogy egybeírás, van olyan, hogy különírás – és a kötőjeles írás az melyiknek a változata?

Teacher: "**Well, but, we know, right?,** that there is writing in one word and writing in two words – and hyphenation, what is that a variant of?"

The discourse markers occurring most frequently in teacher explanations in data analyzed for this study are *hát* "well", *akkor* "then" and *ugye* "right?", but *na* "then", *persze* "of course", *tényleg* "really", *illetve* "or rather", *vajon* "whether" and *szóval* "so" also occurred often. The data clearly demonstrate that these elements contribute in important ways to the creation of text coherence and the understandability and learnability of explanations rather than behaving like functionless fillers.

Teachers often voice their eagerness to know what characterizes the ideal textbook text and the ideal teacher explanation (Ur 1999), and the present investigation demonstrates that the appropriate use of discourse markers plays a very important role in shaping understandable and learnable classroom materials. Conjunctions connecting words and longer segments assist in students' interpreting teacher explanations, since they explicitly mark logical relations between parts. Among the discourse markers in the examples above, *hát* "well" signals a conclusion in (2), providing a partial summary; *tehát* "so" an inference in (3); and *de* "but" a contrast in (4) and (5). We can also see, however, that the majority of discourse markers occurring in teacher explanations

are not of the types that express logical relations, since the connective function is not predominant within the textual functions in this type of classroom discourse. Instead, it is discourse markers that signal the beginning or resuming of explanation (such as *na* "so" and *akkor* "then") as well as those that signal obvious and self-evident facts (such as *ugye* "right?") that dominate. The phrase *bizony ám* "[emphasizer]" in (4) serves to strongly emphasize, while *tudjuk azt* "we know" in (5) refers, through the interactive function of this discourse marker, to activated shared knowledge. Discourse markers occurring in teacher explanations assist students: they help them understand explanations by segmenting information, connecting various parts of it, and, in general, guiding student attention.

In addition, they can also signal teacher attitudes, as is illustrated in the longer stretch of teacher discourse in (6):

(6)

Teacher: Virágváza. **Ugye?** Virágváza. Virágnak a vázája. **Na**, **hát** ezek az alárendelő szóösszetételek és **akkor** most. Az előbb egy nagyon érdekes dolgot láttunk, hogy **hát** most favágó vagy fát vágó. Ö, és itt a következőről van szó. Vannak mondatrészek, amelyeknek van ragjuk. Ezt **ugye** mindenki tudja. És vannak olyan mondatrészek is, amelyeknek nincs ragjuk, **pontosabban** mi a ragjuk? Ezt egyszer megbeszéltük. Az a ragjuk, hogy. **Jó**. **Akkor** vegyük úgy, hogy nincs ragjuk. Majd lehet, hogy visszatérünk rá. Ö, melyik mondatrésznek van ragja? Aki az egyiket tudja, az **talán** jelentkezzék, gyerekek, **hát** ... Csaba?

Teacher: "A flower vase. **Right**? Flower vase. The flowers' vase. **So, well,** this is a subordinating compound, and now **then**. We saw a very interesting thing a minute ago, **namely**, *favágó* "lumberjack" or *fát vágó* "tree [accusative] cutter". And what goes on here is the following. There are sentence elements that receive inflection. Everybody knows this, **right**? And there are sentence elements that do not receive inflection, **or rather**, what is their inflection? We discussed this a while ago. Their inflection is that. **OK. Then** let's say they don't have any inflection. We'll come back to this at some point. Hmm, what sentence elements have inflection? Whoever can think one should **perhaps** raise their hand, class, **well**… Csaba?"

This teacher explanation illustrates the characteristics of this utterance type well: redundancy, a mixture of speech acts, and the use of teacher questions as part of explanations. The discourse markers in the examples (given in boldface) clearly constitute a necessary component of the discourse in question. The discourse marker *hát* "well" occurs three times in the example in (6), while *ugye* "right?" and *akkor* "then" appear twice each, dominant not only in this example but throughout the corpus of data in general. The discourse marker *ugye* "right?" is an interrogative

element that teachers do not expect an answer to. While in everyday conversation it frequently occurs in self-justifications in Hungarian, in teacher discourse it has a different function, with the teacher attempting to involve students into his/her train of through, encouraging them to think together with him/her. In addition, *ugye* "right?" often marks obvious and self-evident facts in teacher utterances, as *Ezt ugye mindenki tudja* "Everybody knows this, right?" in the example shows, which makes reference to the obvious, shared knowledge of teacher and students. The discourse marker *na* "then" plays a structural role, similarly to the discourse marker *akkor* "then", with the former marking the beginning of an explanation, and the latter its resumption. The combination of *na* "then" and a following *hát* "well" (*Na, hát ezek az alárendelő szóösszetételek* "So, well, this is a subordinating compound") emphasizes a self-evident point that occurred previously, while the second occurrence of *hát* (*hát most favágó* 'namely, lumberjack") marks a connection, and the third (*gyerekek, hát...* "class, well…") encodes the speaker's attitudes of reproach. The discourse marker *pontosabban* "or rather [literally: more precisely]" has a procedural function and connects two utterances, and is used by the teacher to self-correct and rephrase what he is saying. The discourse marker *jó* "OK" closes the train of thought and marks a new utterance (introduced by *akkor* "then") beginning. The word *talán* "perhaps" also functions as a discourse marker in the teacher's explanation and not in its primary meaning, expressing its exact opposite through ironic use. The teacher explanation in (6) is completely average in its share of discourse markers: discourse markers are used frequently in this type of classroom discourse – as the example in (7) also demonstrates well:

(7)

Teacher: A minőség- és mennyiségjelző. **Na** most, nem emlékszik valaki, **persze** ezt biztos megbeszéltük, hogy **tulajdonképpen** nem az a helyzet, hogy nincs ragja, hanem, hogy a ragja az, ragja az, **hát** ugyanaz, csak egy kicsit matematikusabb nyelven. **Hát akkor** mi a ragja? Figyelj. Mit teszel be abba az egyenletbe, hogy 25+x=25?

Teacher: "Premodifiers of quality and quantity. **So** now, does anybody remember, **of course**, we must have discussed this, that **in fact** it is not the case that it has no inflection but that that is its inflection, **well**, the same, in a slightly more mathematical language. **Well then**, what is its inflection? Listen. What do you put into the equation 25+x=25?"

In this example, the discourse marker *na* "so", used in its textual function, and *persze* "of course" are used by the teacher to refer to what was said before, i.e. the shared knowledge, while *tulajdonképpen* "in fact" mitigates the statement following it. The first *hát* "well" of the explanation, (*hát ugyanaz* "well, the same") has a connective function as well as signals self-

evidence, while the second is used in its conclusion introducing meaning, strengthened further by *akkor* "then".

As far as the occurrence of discourse markers in the corpus is concerned, teacher explanations are structured in a very similar fashion throughout the data, regardless of the teacher's age or gender, the explained topic, or the age of the students. The beginning of the explanation usually contains a discourse marker that marks the start (e.g. *na* "so"*, akkor* "then"*,* or *hát* "well"*)* and usually connects the current explanation to what had been said earlier, maybe even in previous lessons. The logical structuring of the explanation was aided by discourse markers expressing coordinating logical relations (such as *tehát* "thus"*, hát* "well"*,* and *de* "but"). Teachers used discourse markers also to connect various segments of explanations as well as to change topics (*aztán* "then" and *és akkor most* "and then now"), to close a segment of explanation (*jó* "good") and to add parenthetical remarks (*egyébként* "by the way" and *tulajdonképpen* "in fact"). In addition, they used them to keep students' attention up, to maintain continuous contact with them, and to invite them to think together (*ugye* "right?" and *aha*). Of the range of speaker attitudes that discourse markers can express, the ones that teachers used were those signaling a heightened emotional state and emphasis (*hát* "well" and *bizony ám* "[emphasizer]"). Finally, teachers also used discourse markers that expressed self-evidence (e.g. *persze* "of course"*, ugye* "right?" and *tényleg* "really") and others that signaled the process of discourse planning or thinking (e.g. *nos* "well"*, hát* "well", *szóval* "so" and *pontosabban* "more precisely").

7. Discourse markers in student answers

Due to the asymmetrical nature of the speech situation in question, student answers contained a considerably lower number of types of discourse markers than teacher explanations did, as Figure 2 in section 5 already indicated. The discourse marker most frequently used by students was *hát* "well", the most stigmatized of the discourse markers used in speech. Due to the Hungarian tradition of language cultivation and school teaching practices, the prohibition *Hát-tal nem kezdünk mondatot!* "Do not start a sentence with *hát*!" is widely used despite the fact that it is a linguistic bias with no basis in real life. Primary and secondary school teachers' practices make it widely used and believed. Teachers usually do not accompany the prohibition with an explanation – usually only the terse, announcement-like prohibiting rule is quoted. Pronouncement-like phrasing also plays a role in handing down linguistic misconceptions in a tradition-like fashion (Domonkosi 2007, 149). The pronouncement *Hát-tal nem kezdünk mondatot!* "Do not start a sentence with *hát*!" is short, compact and easy to understand, making it easy to recall and repeat. Ideology heard from teachers and authenticated by their authority is then further constructed and spread by students, even if they really question its validity.

Since *hát* "well" was predominant among the analyzed discourse markers in student

answers, the functions it expresses will now be analyzed in detail and through several examples from the data. Texts of language cultivation and school grammar teaching associate the use of *hát* "well" with the expression of uncertainty. This function of *hát* "well" was actually predominant among student answers – students often used it when they were uncertain of their answers, as the examples in (8) and (9) demonstrate:

(8)
Teacher: Melyikből keletkezett a másik?
Student: **Hát** szerintem az összetett szó keletkezett a jelzőssel szemben.

Teacher: "Which one was the basis for the creation of the other?"
Student: "**Well**, in my opinion the compound was formed against the one with the premodifier"

(9)
Teacher: Milyen műfajú szöveg ez? Tünde, mire gondolhatunk itt?
Student: **Hát** szakirodalom szerintem.

Teacher: "What is the genre of this text? Tünde, what should we think about this?"
Student: "**Well**, it's professional literature, I think."

The examples in (8) and (9) show that the uncertainty expressed by the discourse markers is further strengthened by the use of the word *szerintem* "in my opinion". The uncertainty associated with *hát* was not only proven by the evidence from the corpus of data but also from the focus group interviews, in all four of which it was cited by the participants and illustrated by them with their own examples of how they were stigmatized for using this discourse marker in class. Some participants of the focus group discussions also mentioned that they sometimes use *hát* "well" to gain some time. The same function was also evidenced by data from the corpus:

(10)
Student: (thinking) (goes up to the blackboard): **Hát** ez egy ilyen weblapnak ö olyan része, ahol aa öö a véleményüket kifejtik az emberek.

Student: "**Well**, that's a sort of part of a er home page where er people express their opinions"

The data have shown that, in addition to *hát* "well", the element *öööö* "er" also often occurs in hesitation. Prescriptive works on Hungarian usually mention these two functions, i.e. speaker uncertainty and discourse planning and thinking processes, in connection with *hát* "well". Empirical evidence from the corpus, however, shows that it can occur in many other functions in student answers: it can signal self-evidence, as is illustrated by the examples in (11) and (12):

(11)
Teacher: Melyik királyfi szokott nyerni a mesékben?
Student: **Hát** a jó!

Teacher: "Which prince usually comes out as the winner in children's tales?"
Student: "**Well**, the good one!"

(12)
Teacher: Úgy van, a Szózat. Miért? Mit? Hogyan használja ki a Szózat?
Student: **Hát** hogy Hazádnak rendületlenül légy híve és Légy híve rendületlenül, ó, magyar.

Teacher: "That's right, the Hymn. Why? What? How does the Hymn explore it?"
Student: "Well, that 'support your country without failing' and 'without failing support your country, oh, Hungarian'"

Hát "well" also occurred as a marker of rephrasing in student answers sometimes, where students self-corrected content:

(13)
Student: … csúnya amerikaiak, csúnya írek, csúnya kanadaiak, ez összetett, viszont alapvetően **hát** inkább olyan egyszerűnek, tehát egyszerűnek érzem.

Student: "… ugly Americans, ugly Irish, ugly Canadians, this is complex, but basically, **well**, I feel this to be sort of simple, yes, simple."

In other examples students used *hát* "well" to continue their utterances and to add to them, basically employing a connective meaning, as is evidenced by (14):

(14)
Student: Szerintem azért teheti meg, hogy egy mondatba sűríti, mert végül is azért ebben az

enciklopédiában van egy rész, hogy nyulak, és **hát** ez egy rövid részlet, vagy legalábbis másfél oldal.

Student: "I think it's OK to summarize it all in one sentence because, after all, this encyclopedia has an entry about rabbits, and, **well**, this is a short excerpt, or at least a page and a half"

In most cases, however, students used *hát* "well" as a marker of response, without any trace of speaker attitudes or uncertainty and without reference to self-evidence (like in examples 11 and 12), for instance, as in (15):

(15)
Teacher: És ti itt már, … miket emeltetek ki?
Student: **Hát** nekünk itt az volt kiemelve a színes lapon, bo hogy bombát talált, gyújtóbombát talált, lett figyelmes, értesítette a rendőrséget.

Teacher: "And you here, … what kinds of things did you highlight?"
Student: "**Well**, what we have highlighted here in the colored page is bo– that he found a bomb, a phosphorus bomb, noticed it and called the police."

In student answers, however, *hát* "well" was used in a more limited way than in teacher explanations, where it was also used to express emotions (such as agitation, indignation or surprise) and strengthen the rhetorical nature of what was being said (Schirm 2013b). These functions did not appear in its use by students because of the characteristics of the communicative situation: the hierarchic and asymmetrical nature of the speech situation makes it virtually impossible for students to make evaluative and emotive comments to teachers. This, however, does not explain why inferencing was not a logical relation students used *hát* "well" to express: *hát* "well" could be used with its *tehát* "thus" meaning in the student answers, but it was not.

8. Conclusion

The investigation of the corpus analyzed for this talk did not prove the initial hypothesis to be correct, namely, that classroom interaction would contain more limited use of discourse markers. The use of discourse markers was aligned along school roles: they were used in different proportions and in different functions by teachers vs. students. Both used discourse markers in the textual function, that is, to assist in starting and continuing discourse and connecting discourse segments. In addition, in teacher explanations they also marked a variety of logical relations: the

explicit marking of these relations is what helps students interpret the content of explanations. Discourse markers were also used to structure teacher explanations and to direct attention, when changing topics and summarizing, as well as to connect utterances to what had been said before. Discourse markers were used by both teachers and students in their discourse planning function, to signal thinking, to self-correct, and when hesitating or trying to gain time. Due to the asymmetrical nature of the speech situation, however, students did not use discourse markers in the interpersonal function in their answers, whereas teachers used this function freely, signaling to the students what their relationship to the content of the utterance or to the communicative situation was. In some cases teachers also used discourse markers to express self-reflection and evaluation, and, rarely, for phatic communication.

The analysis also demonstrated that *hát* "well", the discourse marker most frequently used by students and most stigmatized of all, does not only express student uncertainty in student answers (as the linguistic bias holds) but has a much greater range of uses despite the fact that it occurred much less frequently in student answers that in teacher explanations. The results of the analysis clearly show that the functional group of words under investigation, discourse markers, forms a natural part of classroom discourse – both of teacher explanations and student answers – being an effective accessory of communication.

Because the present study has used only 10 classroom lessons, the investigation could be continued by expanding the corpus used in order to verify the validity of the somewhat limited findings presented above, and to be able to statistically examine the relationship between the use of discourse markers and social variables (such as age, gender and status) of the speakers using them. It would also be insightful to compare the present findings with those of other (non-classroom) types of institutional and semi-institutional discourse.

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